

NEW-YORK TRIBUNE

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

To His Colleagues of the City of New-York
Sir: I have herewith transmit to you the Semi-Annual Report of the Police Department, commencing with the 1st of May, and ending with the 31st of October, 1849. Embraced in the Report you will find a large amount of statistical information relative to crime in this City, the violation of Corporation ordinances, and the condition of this Department. There is also connected therewith a table showing the arrests for felonies, misdemeanors and other offenses committed in the corresponding period of time in the year 1848, so arranged that your Honor will be readily enabled to compare the results.

By referring to this table, it will be seen that the number of offenses resulting from the use of intoxicating drinks has greatly diminished during the six months of 1849. In the year 1848 the whole number of arrests for assault and battery, abandonment, disorderly conduct, intoxication, lighting insanity and prostitutes were 10,676, while in the corresponding period of 1849 the arrests for the same description of offenses were 10,391, showing a diminution of 385. This is a matter worthy of consideration, especially when it is considered that a pestilence was raging in the City, and as preventive to which intoxicating drinks were freely prescribed. The contrast is more striking when we compare the number of arrests for intoxication, disorderly conduct and assault and battery, which are the immediate effects of indulgence in strong drinks. In 1848 there were 10,152 persons arrested for those offenses, and in 1849 there were 9,629, showing a diminution of 523.

By referring to the report of arrests it will be seen that during the year 1848, there were 14,184 and in the corresponding period of 1849, there were 14,274 persons arrested, being an increase of 90 over 1848.

The have been 1,462 complaints lodged with the Corporation Attorney for violations of Corporation ordinances, during the six months of which number 297 were against backs, 152 against stages, 290 against carts, and 122 for throwing garbage on the street.

During the last session of the Legislature a law was enacted making it a misdemeanor to throw garbage on the streets of the City of New-York, which it will be seen has had a beneficial effect.

For violating the City ordinance in this respect 228 complaints were made to the Corporation Attorney during the corresponding period of 1848, being 376 more than in 1849.

During the six months of 1849, there were 21,622 persons accommodated with lodgings, being an increase over the corresponding period of 1848, of 4,714. There were 2,552 lost children, and 1,000 to their parents, being 793 less than during the corresponding period of 1848. There were 57 fires extinguished by the officers of the Department; 65 persons rescued from drowning, and 322 stores and dwelling houses found open.

In connection with this report I deem it to be my duty to call the attention of your Honor to a deposit and growing evil which exists amid this community, and which is spread over the principal business parts of the city. It is an evil and a reproach to our municipality, for which the laws and ordinances afford no adequate remedy.

I allude to the rapidly increasing numbers of vagrants and vicious children, of both sexes, who infest our public thoroughfares, hotels, docks, &c.

Children who are growing up in ignorance and profanity, only destined to a life of misery, shame and crime, and ultimately to a felon's doom.

Their numbers are almost incredible, and to those whose business and habits do not permit them searching scrutiny, the degrading and disgusting practices of these almost infants in the schools of vice, prostitution and rowdiness, would certainly be beyond belief. The offspring of a few carelessness, generally integers, and often times the inside of a school room, and so far as our excellent system of public education is concerned (and which may be truly said to be the foundation stone of our free institutions) it is to them an entire inability.

Left, in many instances, to roam day and night wherever their inclination leads them, a large proportion of these juvenile vagrants are in the daily practice of pilfering wherever opportunity offers, and boggling where they cannot steal.

In addition to which, the female portion of the youngest class, those who have only seen scenes of vice, prostitution and rowdiness, to the exclusion of all else, are in the ranks of these prospective recruits of infamy and sin, and from this corrupt and festering fountain flows a ceaseless stream to our lowest brother—the Penitentiary and the State Prison!

Reports have been made to me from the Captains of the 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 10th, 11th and 13th Patrol Districts—from which it appears that the entire force of the police in these districts are as follows described in the Wardens alone, and of these two thirds are females, between eight and sixteen years of age! This estimate I believe to be far short of the number actually thus engaged. As sounding as it may seem, there are many hundreds of parents in this City who absolutely drive their offspring forth to practices of theft and semi-bestiety, that they themselves may live laxly on the means thus secured—selling the very bodies and souls of those in whom their own blood circulates, for the means of dissipations and debauchery. These semi-bestiety and fallen ones may be divided into two classes, as follows:

1st. Those who congregate around the piers, and in their operations, their trade is chiefly landed. Canning and advent in their operations, they still pilfer immense quantities of cotton, sugar, spirits, coffee, tea, &c. from the bales, huds, cases, bars, chests, &c. with which the wharves are generally, more or less loaded, and in the absence of other articles of plunder, they wrench the knobs from doors, steal building hardware from uninhabited dwellings, lead and copper pipe, and even tin roofing! They will even break into houses, and if they can't get out, open a coffee house in a manner so sly and artful, that he is forced to believe the bag burst by accident, and in a few moments some 15 or 20 lbs. are transferred from the plankings of the pier to their capacious baskets or sprouts. It is no uncommon thing for a bushel of sugar to be short from 100 to 100 lbs. through the most unfeeling depredations, and the same system of protection prevails in regard to all exposed articles of value, which are either placed in or near the water.

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